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SUBJECT: TURKISH MEDIA REACTION
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2010

Media Highlights

US Embassy Ankara - Turkey Media Reaction - February 26, 2010 as prepared by the Public Affairs Information Office

How the US is Playing

Obama Administration against Armenian Genocide Resolution (Hurriyet)

Mainstream Hurriyet reports that responding to a question in Congress yesterday, Secretary Clinton stressed that the government doesn't support the Armenian resolution. Hurriyet interprets this as the first announcement from the Obama Administration saying that they don't support the resolution. Clinton said "Turkey and Armenia should be given a chance to resolve their own issues and the US should support both parties without any preconditions." The paper reports that there is speculation in Washington that Clinton's words will have an impact on undecided committee members. CNN Turk online under the headline "Intimidation from Hillary Clinton for 1915" reports that Secretary Clinton intimidated Senate Foreign Relations Committee by saying "The US' priority is for the Turkey-Armenia issue to be resolved. The process should be accelerated. President Obama's stance is obvious regarding the honest definition of the historic incidents. We support all positive developments which will carry forward the Turkey-Armenia normalization process. And, we are against the ones which will change the direction of the process."

Syria-Iran Mocked Clinton in Damascus (Cumhuriyet)

Media outlets report Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and his Iranian counterpart Mahmoud Ahmadinejad met on Thursday in Damascus, defending their strong ties and dismissing US efforts to break up their alliance. Assad told a joint press conference with Ahmadinejad that the US should "not dictate" relationships in the Middle East and announced removal of visa restrictions between the countries. Under the headline, "They Mocked Clinton in Damascus," leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports Assad, in an ironic tone, said "We met today to sign a 'separation accord' between Syria and Iran, but because of a bad translation we ended up signing an accord on scrapping visas," referring to Secretary Clinton's remarks on Wednesday that Washington has been pressing Damascus to move away from Tehran.

Secretary Clinton: "Jeffrey was Not Talking for the US" (HaberTurk, Sabah)

Mainstreams Sabah and Haber Turk report that during the budget talks in the US Congress, Secretary Clinton was asked about Ambassador Jeffrey's remark that "Turkey has security concerns in Cyprus," which was quoted in an interview with Sabah. In her response, Hillary Clinton said "I cannot talk for Ambassador Jeffrey but I think he was expressing Turkish government's views. Of course, our understanding is these are the Turkish government's views, not the US government's." Haber Turk interprets this as "Secretary Clinton left Ambassador Jeffrey alone for his words 'Turkey doesn't occupy its neighbors.'"

In the Headlines

The Good Will Table at Presidency (HaberTurk); Trilateral Summit to Evaluate the Serious Situation (Cumhuriyet)

Media outlets predominantly cover a rare meeting yesterday between President Gul, Prime Minister Erdogan and Chief of General Staff Basbug in an effort to reduce tension. Given the released statement from the presidency afterwards, papers and television consider the primary message to be "current civil-military tension will be resolved within the framework of the Constitution." The issued statement which provided the basis for media reports said: "During the meeting, the issues that are being discussed by the public were handled in depth. Our citizens should be confident that these issues will be solved within the constitutional order and within the framework of our laws, and in this process everyone should act responsibly in order to not tarnish our institutions." In

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connection with this report, media also highlight the release of three senior retired army generals even though the ongoing investigation will continue.

Op-Eds on Gul-Erdogan-Basbug Meeting

Turkish pundits generally took the presidential effort positively, as Murat Yetkin in liberal Radikal observes "the crisis is not over but at least the president prevented it from deepening." Sami Kohen in mainstream Milliyet has concerns particularly on the possible impact of internal crisis on foreign affairs: "Turkey is going through a litmus test on democracy and stability. The US and EU are closely watching, and we may end up seeing statements from them on this crisis because it has an impact on foreign affairs." Liberal Radikal's Cengiz Candar and Islamist/pro-government Yeni Safak's Tamer Korkmaz have something in common as both believe in "Washington's finger" in the government-military tension. They claim that "Neo-cons in Washington along with some think tanks" provoked anti-AKP sentiment in international scene as well as in Turkey.

Davutoglu Meets Sargsian: We're Committed to the Protocols (Zaman) Media outlets report Foreign Minister Davutoglu and Armenian President Sargsian met Thursday in Kiev and discussed the Turkish-Armenian normalization process and the developments in the Caucasus. "We reviewed the Turkish-Armenian normalization relationship in its entirety with open hearts today including our anxieties and the obstacles we face," said Davutoglu. Papers also note that on Thursday, the Armenian parliament made it easy for Yerevan to scrap the protocols signed with Turkey by passing amendments that will allow President Sargsian to suspend ratification and withdraw from previously signed international agreements. Islamist-oriented Zaman says Davutoglu and Sargsian reconfirmed their allegiance to the normalization process.

Meanwhile, the private Armenian news agency Mediamax reported Sargsian told Davutoglu that he believes Ankara cannot be involved in the Karabakh conflict settlement process because of the Turkish side's openly biased stance. Sargsian told Davutoglu that the ratification of the protocols should be completed as soon as possible, otherwise Armenia would recall its signature under the documents. "If Azerbaijan's pressure does not allow the Turkish parliament to ratify the protocols, nothing prevents Turkey's executive authorities from opening the border they had closed prior to the ratification of the protocols," said Sargsian.

Abiyev: Karabakh will Trigger Third World War (Aksam)
Mainstreams Aksam, Hurriyet Online and leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet report Azerbaijani Defense Minister Safar Abiyev warned Thursday that the threat of conflict with Armenia was rising fast and that a "great war" was inevitable if Armenian forces fail to pull out of the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh region. "For 15 years diplomacy has not achieved any concrete results and Azerbaijan cannot wait another 15 years," Abiyev said. "If Armenia does not end its occupation of Azerbaijan's territory, the beginning of a great war in the South Caucasus is inevitable."

Afghanistan Flag Hoisted over Marjah (Cumhuriyet)
Media outlets report NATO forces and the Afghan government took full control of the Taliban stronghold of Marjah on Thursday, installing an administrator and raising the Afghanistan flag. General Larry Nicholson, commander of the US Marines in Marjah, said it was a "historic day," and a "new beginning." Islamist-oriented Zaman reports Marjah was taken back from the Taliban, but that "sporadic clashes" continued.

The Netherlands Arrest Alleged PKK Leader at Turkey's Request (Hurriyet online)

Mainstream Hurriyet website reports the Netherlands' state broadcaster NOS reported Thursday authorities have arrested Hasan Adir, a leader in the outlawed PKK, after crossing the border from Germany, where he has lived since fleeing Turkey in 1995.

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The Dutch Justice Ministry could not immediately confirm that Adir has been arrested at Turkey's request. An extradition hearing is set for March 18, says the report.

Germany Lifts the Ban on Roj TV (Sabah)

Germany lifts the ban on the PKK-affiliated ROJ TV broadcasts which was implemented in 2008, saying that the TV channel got its license from Denmark, and therefore, it's control is in Denmark's hands.

TV Spotlight (CNN Turk)

Professor Ihsan Dogramaci, the founding president of Turkey's Higher Education Board (YOK) and Hacettepe and Bilkent Universities has died in Ankara on Thursday at the age of 94.

The ruling AK Party has decided to send two of its deputies, Avni Dogan and Ahmet Aydogmus, to the party disciplinary board. Dogan has commented last week on 'Ergenekon,' saying, "They blacklisted us for 40 years, now it is our turn to blacklist them." Aydogmus has described all who are against the AK Party as "evil by nature."

Kurdish BDP MP Sirri Sakik said before the general elections in 1999, Deniz Baykal has offered to run "20 Kurdish militants" on the CHP card in the polls in an effort to overcome the election threshold.

On Friday, former Iraqi PM Iyad Allawi will visit Ankara to meet President Gul and PM Erdogan.

Turkey's leading business gathering TUSIAD will soon unveil a package for democratization which will include constitutional changes.

Turkey's leading conglomerate Sabanci Holding plans to increase its personnel by 5 percent in 2010, hiring 2,800 people.

German prosecutors have arrested Alaattin A. and Unalkaplan D., two alleged senior members of a banned Turkish leftist group, DHKP-C, violating immigration laws and extortion.

Libyan leader Gaddafi calls for a "jihad" against Switzerland over the ban of minarets in the country, saying it was an infidel state that was destroying mosques.

Viktor Yanukovych has been sworn in as Ukraine's president.
JEFFREY